1:Gordon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

which a figure, evidently of a Hindu god, has been carved, without doubt after the erection of the stone. Here we have a striking parallel case to the painted and carved menhir near Tregastel in Brittany, upon which has been carved the representation of a crucifix. There are also some carved stones near Nartiang said to represent two women called *mawthandor briew*.

The Khasis say that these great stones were brought sometimes from considerable distances. After being hewn, the stones were laid on a large, wooden trolley and dragged across country by means of ropes of cane, of which plenty can be had from the Wiz country on the southern side of the district, and then placed in position by means of ropes and levers. It seems little short of marvellous that these stones, which sometimes weighed many tons, were placed in position by such primitive means, especially when we consider the great trouble there was to re-erect one of the fallen stones at Stonehenge lately. Nowadays only comparatively small stones are erected, which are generally hewn and erected on the spot, so that there is no necessity for any conveyance.

In conclusion, it may be remarked that the subject of the Khasi monolith is in reality a large one, on which a great deal could be written, but owing to considerations of space it has been found necessary to compress the account within its present limits.

FESTIVITIES, DOMESTIC AND TRIBAL.

Dancing forms the principal part of all the Khasi festivities, and is an important adjunct of some of their religious ceremonies. One of the greatest festivals in the Khasi Hills is the Nongkrem dance; it may be said to be as important an event to the Khasis as the *Eisteddfod* festivities are to the Welsh.

The Nongkrem dance is really part of what is known as the *pamblang ar* goat-killing ceremony, performed by the Siem of Khyrim (or Nongkrem) with the aid of his *sohdar* (high priest) and the various *lyngdohs* (or priests) to Ka Blei Synshar (the ruling goddess), that the crops may prosper and that there may

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be a successful era in store for the people of the State. The goddess on this occasion may be regarded as a Khasi Demeter, although no mysterious form part of her services as at the Grecian Eleusis. The Nongkrem ceremony and dance (now held at Smit) take place in the Lie spring, generally in the month of May. A lucky day having been fixed, the Siem sends a ring of cane (*lyrwah*) by way of a summons to the people of every village in the State, at the same time informing them of the date of the puja, and requesting them to attend with their offerings, consisting of goats and different articles of food. In the meantime various pujas have been taking place in the house of *Ka Siem Sad*, the Siem priestess, which it would be tedious to describe in detail. The more interesting points only will be mentioned. A fortnight before the puja and dance at Smit the *sah-blei*, or high priest, pours out libations of liquor in the *kyrem-blang*, or place where the sacrificial goats are kept, and in front of the great post (*ut diang ewing*, or Khasi oak), in the house of the Siem priestess. Dancing then takes place in front of the post. Later on the Siem, with the high priest and other attendant priests, walks with extremely slow gait to a small hill where a stone altar has been prepared, and sacrifices a cock in honour of *u'lei Shillong*, or the god of the Shillong Peak. A silver dish with powdered rice, liquor in a gourd (*ka'iad um*), betel-nut, and some leaves of the Khasi oak (*diang ewing*), are also necessary adjuncts of the puja. A goat is then sacrificed, and the sacrifice is followed by a dance of twenty-two men armed with swords and shields and chowries (fly-flaps). Having danced before the altar, the party returns to the house of the Siem priestess and executes another dance in the great courtyard. The Siem and certain selected persons dance in front of the *nishat blei*, or holy post of Khasi oak inside the house of the Siem priestess, the dancers being entertained with dried fish and ginger. Then follows the great dance of girls and men in front of her house. The girls dance in the centre, taking such tiny steps, that the lifting of their feet from the ground is hardly perceptible, the arms held down to the sides and the eyes demurely downcast. It is on this occasion that they wear the peculiar silver (and sometimes gold) crowns illustrated in the

1: Gordon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR? Khasi AR?

women from the War country, wearing their picturesque dress, amongst whom was the wife of the Siem of Bokwai with her little daughter. The dance was a pretty sight, and I have seldom seen such evidence of unaffected happiness as was exhibited by the people on this occasion. Dancing may be described as one of the characteristic features of Khasi life.

The *Syntong Beh-diang-khlem* festival takes place annually at *Jowai* and elsewhere in the Jaintia Hills in the deep water moon month (= *Jyllien*, or June). *Khlem* is the Khasi word for plague or pestilence, and *beh-diang* signifies to drive away with sticks. The festival may be described as follows:—The males rise betimes on the day fixed and beat the *roof* with sticks, calling upon the plague-demon to leave the house. Having done this, later on in the day they go down to the stream where the goddess "Ailiun" dwells. Then poles of great length, which have been newly cut, are held across the stream. The people jump on the poles and try to break them; when they succeed in doing so, a great shout is given. After all these poles have been broken, a very large pole is fixed across the stream. The people then divide themselves into two parties, and contend for the possession of the tree. The contest, however, is a good-humoured one, and although many buffets are given and received, these are not regarded seriously, and there are seldom any fights. Col. Bivar says the contending villagers, in their excitement, sometimes relapse into a state of almost complete nudity. The party which succeeds in obtaining possession of this post is supposed to gain health and prosperity during the coming year. Col. Bivar remarks that the origin of this so-called ceremony is said to be that the god of thunder, "*Ubi pyrthei*," and Ka Ailiun, the goddess of the stream, enjoyed its performance. Many innovations, however, have crept in. People disguise themselves as giants and wild beasts, they also parade images of serpents, elephants, tigers, peacocks, &c. Dancing is carried on with enthusiasm by the males, the girls, clad in their best attire, remaining as lookers. Before the meeting breaks up the males play a sort of game of hockey with wooden balls.

776 u Synjeng, the lame devil who lives in the thicket and tickles people to death,
ka ron, the worst of all the demonesses (only among the Synteng),
u 'euid-lam-ia, the executor of the commands of god, who has to fetch the souls into the other world,
u Thlen, the devil of wealth and comfort who can only be worshipped by human sacrifice,
ka sner, a demoness who brings violent death,
ka syrii, the demoness who scratches and cuts, saws, and files (by pain in the intestines),
ka jumi, the demoness of earthquakes,
ka niengriang, the demoness who causes children's illnesses (especially in the navel),
u 'euid briew or u 'euid ngon, the devil who attacks people in the early morning and causes stitches in the side or hoarseness,
u 'euid-kynte-maran, the devil who makes headaches,
u synkai bamon, an evil spirit,
ka rambandi, a demoness.

3. Revered Powers of Nature:

777 The Punatit River, to whom the kings of Mawsynram, Nongrim, and Nobosohpoh offer sacrifices.
the Khai-mare River among the Lur,
the Kupili River among the Synteng,
the Myntang River among the Synteng,
the Shillong Peak (mountain near Shillong),
the Sohlang Mountain near Shillong,
the Kyllong Cliffs,
the Synger Mountain,
the mountain Pyndiang blei lyngkoh near Shangpung (Jaintia).

• 777 778 2. Methods of Warding Off Evil Spirits

The Khasi do not practice magic in the

• 76) strictest sense of the word. It is rather an
75% instinctive activity, which is influenced by
superstition to which they have succumbed. In
their opinion all misfortune and bad luck are
caused by evil spirits. The chief purpose of
(82) their sacrifices is to propitiate them (khein
ban khai). But they well know that it is pos-
sible to cause others harm with the help of the
kwaid. Their magic consists of this and in
warding off harm. The magic is not accomplished
by special magicians who make a profession of
it; but whoever believes he is able to harm
others with the help of the devil tries it. In
the same way, those who have to ward off harm of
any kind hope to be able to accomplish this with
the help of the devil.

75) If anyone has a throat ailment, whether it
75% is a tumor or only hoarseness, they believe that
7% it occurs through the influence of the devil u
lasumdoh. Therefore a rooster or a pig is sacri-
ficed in the courtyard of the person concerned.
The blood of the sacrificed animal is given to
the sick person to drink so that he may recover.

They do similar things when a person has a
toothache or is sick with some kind of mouth
ailment. This sickness is ascribed to the devil
u jingkih.

75) If a child is born blind they believe that
9% adultery on the part of the father is the cause.
This adultery is punished in the child by the
devil u kyrdep.

The demoness ka tyrdew causes attacks of
cramps, and convulsive cramps are the work of
the feared demoness ka shwar.

Existent ailments are made definitely worse
by the devil u thyrrei.

Whoever goes into the forest and hears the
calls kăw-kait, kăw-kait, should hurry away be-
cause the devil u 'wuid-lyngjang lives there and

the house concerned. Then they go slowly down to the river. Large poles, which were set out the day before, are now placed on the river. The people jump onto the poles and try to break them. If this happen, a general great shout of joy sounds forth. If all the poles are broken, they fetch a particularly strong pole, actually a beam, and place it over the river. The people now divide up into two halves, and a battle begins for the possession of this beam. But the fight is a friendly one and even though there are many blows and even wounds, the people do not engage in a serious fight, even though they battle and struggle for the possession of the beam so hard that many lose all their clothes. The side which has the luck of winning possession of the beam will be healthy (free of cholera) and well for the coming year according to the belief of the people.

The use of charcoal also borders on magic. Thus P.V. Kartte, Apostolic Missionary, S.D.S. writes: (7) If a mother has a long journey to

7. Kartte, Die Religion der heidnischen Khasi [The Religion of the Heathen Khasi], Apostelkalender, 1895. [Apostle Calendar]

make, she makes a black mark with charcoal on the forehead of her child to protect it from any harm. Then she takes a longish piece of wood, splits it at one end into four parts, and puts the piece of charcoal in between. The mother carries this in her hand on the journey.

The same missionary also reports the doings of the Khasi during an eclipse of the moon: "If there is an eclipse of the moon, the Khasi believe that a frog is with the moon and is eating it up. The Khasi like the moon very much, and in order to prevent the frog from eating up the

789 while short prayers are murmured." To ward off the influence of evil spirits, the Khasi use all kinds of magic means. They prepare a kind of lattice work from split igrŭ (thin bamboo), which they fasten side by side evenly with a binding object (u thri), with the inside towards the front, and they hang it up on forked branches in the forest. The number of these little sticks is always uneven, 13 or 15 more or less. In the middle of the little sticks a colorful line (blue or red) is drawn (Fig. 1). Such lattice work or bamboo flags are often placed several together in some place in the forest. [Figs. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, spirit sticks and spirit lattices.]

In addition to these lattice works or flags they also make spirit sticks or spirit posts which they also place in the thickets and which have the same purpose of driving off the spirits or of making them harmless. [416] Such sticks are cut from wood and are either quite simple square sticks with a crooked, added point (Fig. 5) or they are simple square sticks with a triple point (Fig. 2) all cut from one piece. These sticks are not painted. In addition to these simple spirit sticks the Khasi also make beautiful painted sticks. Fig. 3 shows a square stick which has a triple square decoration in blue and red. Its point is not notched, but cut slanted or crooked. Fig. 4 shows another kind. It is a six-sided wooden stick which has a hat or head (of one piece with the stick), the point of which is notched or set off. This spirit stick has circular decorations of red and blue interrupted by straight, horizontal lines. Such sticks also occur in an eight-sided form.

One often finds several of such spirit sticks or flags placed beside each other in a little place in the woods or thickets. [Illustration: Magic lattices against the forest devil].

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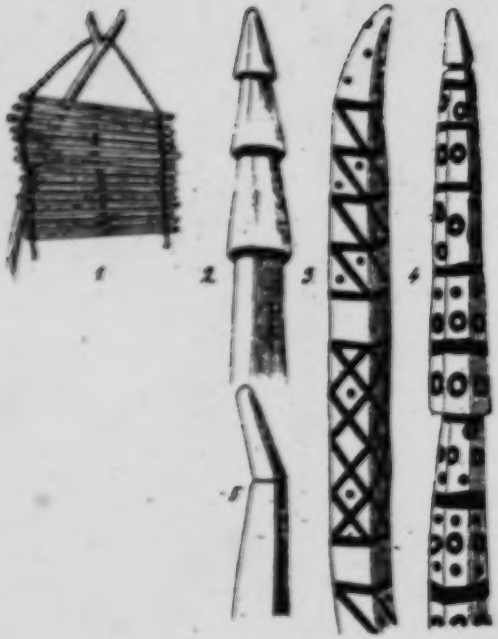

[415] Figs. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5,

Spirit sticks and spirit lattices.

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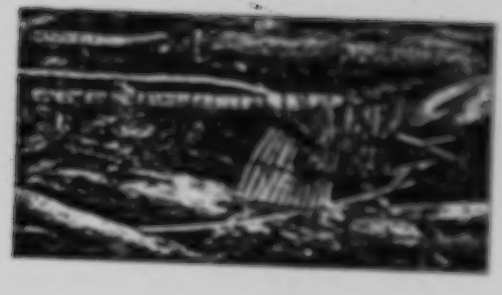

[416]

Magic lattices against the forest devil.

762 The Khasi also erect little platforms with little houses from long bamboo sticks in which food is served to the spirits of the woods and fields (to serve [slang] actually means spread out, as one spreads out a carpet or as one spreads out leaves for serving rice on).

[779] But not only through making sacrifices do the Khasi try to propitiate the devils and thereby make them harmless. They even try it with violence. Thus, as mentioned above, they drive the cholera demoness out of the house with sticks. Also during a cremation they shoot three arrows to ward off evil spirits.

There are many ways of warding off evil spirits; or, for acquiring their help words, wishes, or curses are used, as, for example, during a match of arrow shooting, the watchers who stand by the target try to keep the arrows of the opponents from hitting the target by calling on some god (kauid) and the more they shriek, the sooner they believe they will attain their purpose They wish to influence the arrows of the opponents

). Taboos (sang)

784 The sang or taboos of the Khasi also belong
782 to superstition. Sang means the same as "sacrilegiously or most strictly forbidden." This sang can be traced back to totemistic views. Sang can be something for a single person, for a house (iing) or a family, for a sib and a whole race (jaid). If a man or a woman whose spouse has
[58] 426] died remarries, the sang is transferred to the relatives of the deceased man or woman. This "inheritance" of the sang is different according to the sib. By accepting the sang the inheritors must pay 11 of a [417] kaw or 7 1/2 of a kaw or 5 1/2 of a kaw. By kaw the number 1280 is actually understood. But it means, however, that